

**GUILFORD BOARD OF EDUCATION
PUBLIC FORUM ON SCHOOL FACILITIES
WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2008
GUILFORD HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM, GUILFORD, CT**

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Bill Bloss called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. Board members present were Bill Bloss, Barbara Dudley, Lou Iorio, Linda Sanacora, Keith Bishop, Alan Meyers, Kathleen Nolan, and Mary Beeman.

2. Receive Input from Members of the Public on Guilford High School and Adams Middle School Facility Options

Chairman Bloss welcomed members of the public to the public forum. He summarized the process that the Board and the Community Task Force on School Facilities (CTFSF) has completed with regard to evaluating the facility and program space needs at Adams Middle School and Guilford High School. He reminded the public that there will be another public forum on Monday, September 8, 2008, at 7:30 p.m. in the GHS Library. He then invited members of the audience to speak.

Christine Bloomberg: Ms. Bloomberg identified herself as a member of the Guilford PACT. She stated that she is appalled at the condition of both Adams and GHS. She stated that she is very concerned about her son because he has allergies. She stated that the high school should be a showcase and, if forced to choose (between the two schools) she would want a new high school, but believes that Adams should also be addressed immediately.

Ray Luden: Mr. Luden suggested that the tax base in Guilford does not support two new schools. He encouraged all Town Boards to get together to create a vision for the Town. He also expressed concern about the tax impact that two new schools will have on citizens.

Chris Moore: Mr. Moore identified himself as a member of the Guilford PACT. He read a statement from the PACT stating that the degradation of the school facilities has been a gradual process. He stated that it is not okay to under-spend on school facilities and subject students and faculty to unhealthy environments. He stated that spending on schools should be viewed as an investment, not an expense. He stated that Guilford should increase spending on educational programs and facilities. Mr. Moore concluded by stating that the PACT supports the recommendation made by the CTFSF.

Karen Goldberg: Dr. Goldberg identified herself as a pediatrician. She expressed concern for her patients with asthma and other health issues attending Adams Middle School. She stated that she would support two new schools and supports the CTFSF's recommendation to begin with GHS.

Roger Winer: Mr. Winer read a letter he wrote to the Editor of the Shoreline Times and Guilford Courier expressing his support for the CTFSF recommendation.

Jim Dray: Mr. Dray stated that he supports two new schools. He thanked the BOE for their service to the community. He stated that as a member of the Guilford PACT he is confident that their there is a collective commitment to “get the word out” about the facilities/referendum.

Dee Jacob: Ms. Jacob stated that while GHS was an adequate facility when her older children attended the school, it no longer is an appropriate facility. She noted that just as business has changed, teaching and education have too. She also noted that the district’s Wellness Policy does not address the health and safety of our facilities. Ms. Jacob stated that she supports the recommendations made by the CTFSF following their thorough process.

Keri Henley: Ms. Henley stated that she is a parent of four children, including a 7th grader. She stated that she has considered moving him to another school because she has concerns about the air quality and physical environment of Adams. Ms. Henley credited Dr. Forcella for his leadership and stated that she supports the CTFSF recommendation and agrees with the Guilford PACT white paper.

Erica Gunn: Ms. Gunn asked if the cost estimate for a new high school includes the demolition of the existing school. CTFSF Co-Chair Mary Jo Kestner responded that it does. Ms. Gunn stated that the district needs a long-term commitment to maintenance of our school facilities. She expressed concern that financial support for educational programs will be negatively impacted if we build two new schools. Chairman Bloss responded that new school buildings need not and should not impact on programs. He also stated that part of the CTFSF solution is to address long-term maintenance issues.

Joe Petrowski: Mr. Petrowski asked if the Board foresees the addition of all-day Kindergarten in the district in the near future. Chairman Bloss stated that, based on recent conversations with State Representative Deb Heinrich, it is not likely that the state State will mandate all-day Kindergarten. He also stated that Guilford’s current school facilities cannot accommodate it.

Mr. Petrowski stated that he believes grades should be reconfigured so that elementary school is K-5. To accommodate the additional grade he suggested that the town be redistricted and Adams converted to a 5th elementary school.

Mr. Petrowski added that safe buildings should be the most important consideration.

Tim Harris: Mr. Harris stated that he supports two new schools. He stated that it will be important to market the concept of two new schools and to convince those who remain unconvinced. He stated that he believes that if the Town chooses to do nothing to address the facility needs this will cause people to move out of Towntown.

Barry Felson: Mr. Felson stated that his family chose to move to Guilford because of the education system. He stated that he believes that the school buildings belong to the community and need to be utilized more outside of the school day. He also noted that he does not think that

kids have a voice in this process. Mr. Felson also urged voters to consider moving their offices into GHS or Adams should these buildings become available to lease.

Lori Geller: Ms. Geller stated that she is the parent of four small children. She stated that we don't need fancy buildings. She state that we need safe, healthy environments and happy teachers.

Lisa Johnson: Ms. Johnson stated that she is an Adams graduate. She expressed concern about the undefined timeline to address the needs at Adams and the increased costs to the Town based on escalating building costs. Ms. Johnson offered some analysis of current and future financial market conditions and suggested that due to decreasing interest rates she believes that it would be prudent to bond a new Adams facility sooner rather than later. Ms. Johnson also recommended hiring a full-time person dedicated to analyzing and developing the best solution for Adams. She suggested that options for the existing Adams may include renovation for commercial use or selling it. Ms. Johnson also suggested moving the portables at Adams to the elementary schools to accommodate all-day Kindergarten.

Charles Glass: Dr. Glass expressed concerns that further delaying actions to address the needs at Adams and GHS will cause the Town to face issues that will develop in our other facilities as they age. He also expressed concern about the effect the deteriorating facilities will have on property values in town. He also noted that the facilities are underutilized by the community.

Dr. Glass stated that he believes that the overwhelming opinion of the community is to build two new schools.

Marianne Marian Breeze: Ms. Breeze stated that, while she believes we should have two new schools in Guilford, she supports the CTFSF recommendation to build a new high school and address the immediate health and safety issues at Adams.

In conclusion, approximately 100 community members attended the public forum.

Upon a motion made by Mr. Bishop and seconded by Mrs. Beeman, the Board voted to adjourn at 8:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Lorri Hahn
Clerk to the Board of Education